

Meeting Date: January 11-12, 2007

Agenda Item No. 21

Agenda Item: Smith Creek Donation

Approved by: TTT

Prepared by: Katherine Cousins and Gregg Servheen

Background:

This is an acquisition by fee-title donation of a 620-acre parcel located on the Kootenai River flood plain in Boundary County. This project was conceptually approved by the Commission during Executive Session in November 2006.

The parcel adjoins the southern end of the 1,400-acre Boundary Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and is encumbered by a Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easement. The property will be incorporated into a Northern Idaho WMA which includes the 1,400-acre Boundary Creek parcel and a 40-acre wildlife mitigation parcel near Elmira. Operational funding for the donated parcel will be provided by BPA in exchange for Albeni Falls mitigation credits.

Ducks Unlimited (DU) acquired the Smith Creek property in 2003, via a North American Wetland Conservation Act Grant. Following the acquisition, DU and the Department entered into an MOU and lease allowing the Department to assume management authority for the property. Currently, there is no stable source of operating funds to control the spread and new introductions of invasive noxious weeds on the donated property. The Department manages the property in cooperation with a local citizen management committee.

Once under Department ownership, an operating budget will be provided by the Bonneville Power Authority (BPA) through the Albeni Falls Wildlife Mitigation Program. Department ownership of the gifted property and its enrollment under the BPA program will increase our management economies of scale and our abilities to improve the habitat on these two contiguous parcels.

IDFG pays a fee in lieu of taxes (FLIT) for all fee-title properties. We estimate FLIT payments will be \$4.76 per acre, for a total annual cost of approximately \$2,953 for the subject property.

Policy issues:

Land acquisition in accordance with Commission land acquisition policy.

Public Involvement Process:

The Smith Creek Management Committee and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho are supportive of Department ownership and management on the Smith Creek parcel. Boundary County commissioners have been contacted and are supportive of DU donating the parcel to the Department. The local citizen management committee will continue to assist the Department in identifying funding priorities and the public will be informed and contacted for their input regarding management of the property.

Justification:

Acquisition of this parcel would provide partial habitat mitigation for the construction and operation of Albeni Falls Dam and abides by IDFG goals outlined in the Albeni Falls Wildlife Protection, Mitigation, and Enhancement Plan. Additionally, this property fulfills Department land acquisition objectives by providing wetlands for waterfowl production and public access and hunting opportunities.

Action Requested:

Approval of Commission to proceed with acquisition by fee-title donation.

Staff Recommendations:

The Lands Committee recommends proceeding with acquisition by fee-title donation.